PS
3513
G767a

A
000 925 208
1

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

Ad Matrem

Ad Matrem

and Other Poems

By

Percy Stickney Grant

New York
INGALLS KIMBALL
MCMV

Copyright 1905 by
PERCY STICKNEY GRANT



Arranged and Printed at
The CHELTENHAM *Press*
New York

3513
G767a

Contents

Ad Matrem 7
The Last Gift 13
A Lancashire Lover 14
Benares 16
At Delhi Gate 18
Compensation 20
November 22
Behind the Lotus-Flower 23
Fuji-Yama 24
Burd Helen 25
Two Roses 26
The Lover 27
Hero at Sestos 28
The Golden Cross 29
Light Lingers Long 30
Shadows 31
The Musician 32
A Call to Prayer 33
A Tapestry 34
The Composer 35
A Quatrain 36
An Italian Sonnet Sequence 37
Sonnets of Seasons 45

Present Day Sonnets

The Christ 49
The Altar-Rail 51
Our Looms 52
Street Musicians 53
Cuba Libre 54
Sophocles 55
The Police Court 56
New Hampshire 57
Carmargo 58
The White Hearse 59
Democracy 60
The Pacific 61

Ad Matrem

I

O Christ, you left not even Cynthia.
The stars are empty now,
Their gods and goddesses are gone.
In leafy glade, on shadowy hillside are
No longer nymphs at play,
Thy sorrow-saddened brow,
The tree you died upon,
Frightened those happy ones away.
Bacchus' exulting crew,
Scorned, fell back from you;
White Aphrodite withered to wan foam.
What hast thou brought instead?
All men could pour the lustral, pleading wine
And bear a gift to Hercules' great shrine;
Or love, forget and rove
In Cybele's dim grove.
All maids could follow where Adonis led,
In verdant meadows plumed with iris roam,
And laugh and dance and sing
Prinked out with buds of Spring.
Calm priests could slay a lowing hecatomb;
Youths look with wistful eye,
That longed and might espy
A sweet form glide into her fountain home;
Or hear the quick-drawn breathing of a race
And turn to meet the glory of Apollo's face.

II

What hast thou brought? Where is the waving throng,
Bright eyed, with loud hosannas and shrill song
That strewed torn palms before thy regal way?
No cymbal's clash and smiling train,
But tears and moans, reproach, disdain,
Until the end on Calvary did stay.
Art thou our God and archetypal man?
As ages pass must we forever scan
Thy cross, thy drooping head and arms stretched wide;
Thy thorns, thy nakedness and bleeding side;
The skull-shaped hill on which you died?
A sight that blasted Spring's blue heaven blind,
Till midnight stars, amazed, at noon-day shined;
While earthquakes disemboweled pregnant graves,
And holy things stood stark to sneering knaves—
Is that the best our eyes will ever see?
Must heaven be entered through thine agony?
What bringest thou who treadest on past joy?
As Autumn's feet o'er hill and dale
Trample the fallen fruits, the fallen leaves,
Dost lead a load of yellow sheaves?
Or drivest thou the storm and gale
Of Winter desolate and pale?
What givest thou for joys thy griefs destroy?

III

The veil is rent, the shrines in silence rest;
The sphinx, her envied secret in her breast
Around whose feet the bones of wisdom spread,
Can give no more her riddle, all is said.
Nature no more her gilded net can cast,
For thou, O Christ, hast come to us at last.
Lo, with thee, love has come unknown before:
Not Aphrodite with her Lesbian lore
And reckless boy, blind, hapless, insolent;
But love that gains through suffering content,
Whose face the awful gates of death revealed,
Where Mary, mother, weeping, wondering kneeled,
And sorrow, holding goads for memory,
And grief, marred portress to love's sacristy.
There death was changed like Aaron's rod
And man bereft beheld the love of God.

IV

All worships change, save that a son can give;
Though altars perish, motherhood will live.
A singer thou, my mother, whose soul's song
Enchants the hearts that hear.
No verse can fitly phrase
The rythm of thy days;
Sweet rhyme has not thy cheer,
Euterpe, dear to thee, is not so strong.
Daughter of Puritans, like them as stern
To champion right, to fight the wrong.
From thy high path thou wilt not turn,
But look askance at tripping pleasure,
As though her merry dance
Could turn thy heavenly glance
From misery's full measure,
And thou forget thy errand of deliverance;
Thou fleest her caress,
Pleasure to thee is selfishness.
Yet nestling in thy strength lies ever,
Like a reflection in a river,
Sweet as arbutus underneath the snow,
Thy second self, a queen in fairy show.
Thou livest in rich thought,
That comes to thee unsought,
The unspoiled splendor of a summer day.
The common world for thee
Is hung in jubilee;
Each with his best adorns thy royal way.

V

O how can love its vision realize!
For near thee I would ever dwell,
But separation, sin and self arise
To hide thee from mine eyes.
I say "Farewell,"—
My heart foreboding falters
To take my leave of thee and happiness,
Till love, my life, its service strangely alters
And slays me by its own excess.
But no! I see a larger plan.
Sweet love need not lament in barren days,
When hands touch not, nor fond eyes scan
The form it broods always
But cannot greet.
Where love exists all love is in relation.
So in Christ's love and loving ministry
Thou art exalted in my exaltation;
Soul touching soul I walk with thee
Alone along the crude mill-village street.
Thou art not absent, nor I desolate,
When I in this great love participate.

VI

Thou reconcilest me to things divine
And lead by love where feet are loath to tread;
Alluring as a rainbow draws a child,
Who, breathless, runs to grasp it, but beguiled
By its attainless beauty, still is led
On, on, in ardent quest where heaven and earth entwine.
Yes farther still. As far
As flames the last, swift star
Upon the brink of being thou shalt lead.
If those orbs cease to roll
And all is void but soul,
In that new world, my life thy light will need.
Bright eyes and merry ways attract a boy,
And youth in these too often seeks its joy;
But manhood looking nearer
The awful spirit sees,
Then, with a vision clearer
Mere flesh ceases to please,
And in the face
It seeks heaven's grace.
Sweet face, sweet mother, I can see
To-day the world's maturity;
The gods forlorn,
The Lord Christ born,
That man might rise by thy love's regency.

The Last Gift

What can he give who has given his all,
 Thrown his one wreath when the curtain arose?
 Hands, must they lag when the heart overflows,
Empty of gifts at the curtain's last fall?

What can he give who has given his heart,
 Wagered for love all a lifetime can gain?
 Henceforth is all he would offer in vain—
Fruitless since all was bestowed at the start?

Gone is his wreath; but he joins with the rest,
 Gilding his laurel with loudest encore.
 Lost is his heart; who, then, fain would give more,
Tested, triumphant, can cry, "Love is best."

A Lancashire Lover:

(At the Undertaker's.)

'Tis so sudden and strange
To me.
You are used to the dead,—
Used to see
The closed eyes, to arrange
The cold hands, the stiff head.

You can't feel as I feel;
For you
Know the shrouds you will need
The year through.
You buy land, and a deal
Of trade warrants the deed.

A week since I saw her.
The night
Seems now distant as Noah.
Ah,—how bright
Was the kitchen; like myrrh
Smelled the fresh-washed pine floor.

She talked, laughed, I was dumb,
Until,
Shamefaced, I showed the ring.
O, I still
See her lips as her thumb
She slipped through the great thing.

For you see I told clerk
At store,
'Twas for me, was the ring.
Now I swore
It was big as a park,
Said a smaller I'd bring.

Then, next day, she fell sick.
A maid
With no home of her own,
Though she prayed,
Yet they sent her off quick
To the work-house, alone.

While I laughed o'er my loom,
And felt,
Now and then, for the ring
'Neath my belt,
Wishing week-end would come,
Little dreaming the sting.

Planned the house we should have,
We two;
Carpet, table, chairs, stove,
What we'd do:—
She lay dying, the grave
Was a-beckoning my love.

Aye, she died more of shame?
'Tis like.
I'll complete here my vow.
I could strike:—
But 'tis useless to blame!
May she have the ring now?

Benares

I pray for the sad souls that pray
By Ganges, the flower-strewn river,
Whose blue, gleaming waves wash away
The gifts and the sins of the giver.

As he dips himself thrice in the flood,
And drinks of it, laves in it, splashes,
Till his sins flow away like the mud
Which scours the bowl that he washes.

Through the dark palace gates of Gwalior
Throng pilgrims, their souls heavy laden;
Down, down the vast steps to the shore,
Move the elders, slim youth, jeweled maiden.

While naked bronze, pedestaled high,
Some prone or awhirl make their prayer:
Or wrapped in bright robes softly sigh
As at the broad river they stare.

Where all things are sacred save man
And woman, the meek burden-bearer;
Dream-weary and starved is life's span
And the tied shroud is burned with the wearer.

I pray that a life may appear,
Like our own born of man and of woman,
Revealing man's love for man here,
A love most divine because human:

BENARES

To destroy the divisions of creed,
 To frame of all people one nation,
To supply without grudging all need
 And give birth to the God in creation.

I pray for the sad souls that pray
 To Ganges the thrice sacred river,
Which springs from the snows far away
 And will flow with forgiveness forever.

At Delhi Gate

A blind girl grinding corn,
Beside worn women three;
Her head awhirl, her bare arms torn,
She stared at vacancy.

As fast the stones went round
She cried out bitterly,
"Why kneel I here upon the ground,
Chained to this task and ye?

"I toil but others eat,
In a world I cannot see.
I will arise from this squat seat
And end my misery."

Then one hag, brown and old,
As the wheel ground rapidly,
Toothless, her wrinkled wisdom told
The girl's dark agony.

"The blind with the old must stay.
Your sisters, child, are we.
Men mock us, turn their heads away
And feed us grudgingly."

The girl knelt stiff with rage,
As hooded cobra crests.
"I, sister to your palsied age!
See, have I shriveled breasts?"

The next said: "I have learned
This world was made for men.
A woman's soul by heaven is spurned.
Why will you chatter then?"

The girl sank back. Her moan
Was like a lost soul's cry.
"On earth no lover have I known.
Is there no love on high?"

The third spoke, swift her wheel,
The smooth meal slipping fast:
"Like you at these hard stones I kneel,
Like them my youth is past.

"The fields throb warm with sun,
Cool waters fill the well,
The nibbling kids by their mothers run
And sweet the mangoes smell.

"Like poor beasts, trees, and fields,
We must give something, too.
Child, since all life an increase yields,
Let God give bread by you."

The blind girl grasped her wheel.
"Smooth kids! sweet mango-tree!
Great Lord, whom none can see or feel,
I'll live and toil for thee."

Compensation

When gallant robins sing
Through loosened sweets of Spring,
As you plod off to work,
Wish not to change or shirk
The day's routine, dear soul;
 But view the whole.

When moon and stars shine bright
Some night, some summer night,
And weary, you must sleep
And cannot vigil keep,
Sigh not, alas! dear soul;
 But view the whole.

When music's choirs complain
In melancholy strain,—
"All beauty must decay,
Let love then seize the day."
Fear not such loss, dear soul;
 But view the whole.

When pleasure bands you see
As you go thoughtfully,
Cast down by sin and woe,
Long not their joy to know.
Love thine own tears, dear soul,
 And view the whole.

COMPENSATION

"What is the whole?" you ask,
"The face within the mask?"
That beauty's self you are,
When ruled by duty's star.
Not to enjoy, but be, dear soul,
That is the whole.

November

I push in my house-door wide.
The fallen, sear leaves outside,
Aswirl in the autumn wind,
Like stealthy souls that have sinned,
All shrunken and hectic, dry,
Outstrip me and hasten by
O'er vestibule, hall and stair,
They rattle and battle there;
As if to forsake the dead,
The swift coming cold the dread,
To flee from the Winter's storm
And fawn on the live, the warm,
In search of the fire's glow,
The Summer dead long ago.
But I—I must close the door,
Across the bright, leaf-strewn floor.
The leaves underneath my feet
Must wander again the street,
From hearth and from heart swept away;
Or, I perish, too, as they.

Behind the Lotus-Flower

Behind the lotus-flower the treasure lies,
In white and gold pagodas Burma builds
To great lord Buddha of the eight-fold way.
Not in the dirt where alien soldiers dig,
Nor far above where purest gold caps all;
But in the midst behind the sovereign bloom,
There lies the treasured image of the God.
Then seek not, brother, for the gift of gifts,
Thy life's sweet secret, solemn and so brief,
In things below, though lovely is the earth,
Nor in the heavens, though lofty is the sky;
For in thyself the richest wonder lies.

Fuji-Yama

I turned, and seeing Fuji, thought I dreamed:—

A mountain in the moon, so far and white,
So white and still, slow motioned towards the sky,
So strong on earth, so merged with all above.

No ragged strife of summit cut the heavens,
No agony of struggle petrified,
Nor humble head bowed by the glacier's hand.

Why vex with thought, when Fuji sits serene?
Why fret and fume, when his white head is cold?
Why fear, when he so near to heaven, is calm?

Burd Helen

Wan maid, what is your woe?
Beside his horse you go
Awearily.
Clasp her, O cruel knight,
Upon your steed so white;
Speak cheerily.

O'er bare, sad moors you roam,
Girl page. Where is your home,
Your kith and kin?
Now at the water's edge,
Alas, he gives no pledge.
Black death and sin!

Wan maid, what is your woe?
Torn feet, dazed brain? "Ah, no!
Alack-a-day!
I love and am disdained,
I follow, for I'm chained.
Ah, well-a-way!"

"The pangs that pierce my side
Would stay, though I did ride
The livelong day.
Death stares if I turn back,
Death lurks along my track,
In love's dark way."

Two Roses

Were you to blame,
Child Love,
That as they came
So merrily across the fields,
A wild-rose-laden limb,
Teased her to pluck the flower it yields
For him?

Did you then pull,
Boy Love,
Your small hand full
Of petals, dropping one by one
O'er your palm's crumpled rim,
Until you left the husk alone
For him?

What a prank you played,
Fie Love!
Another maid
Laughed out, "Wilt thou my sweet bud have?"
And, then, was it your whim?
Plucked out the stem the first girl gave
To him.

The Lover

I love her body and her soul,
 But I must choose.
Ah me! her heart, it is so kind,
So sweet her body, pure her mind,
 I would not lose
A petal of the perfect whole.

Her gentle spirit wounds her flesh,
 She feeleth woe
So keenly. Sorrow, pain and sin
Gaze at her all bright within
 And grieve her so,
Tears mar the body's golden mesh.

Her face is fair as temple gates.
 I linger there
And look and love, then reverently
Pass in, the fairer soul to see;
 Nor may compare
The door to what within awaits.

For there are angel choirs heard
 And heaven's appeal.
There jeweled windows, mystic sight,
Reveal their beauty and the light;
 So there I kneel
Me down and—*worship*—is the word.

Hero at Sestos

Will he not come to-night?
Moon and ye stars, shine bright,
Tell him to come to-night.
For my heart yearns for him,
And my brow burns for him;
His voice will rule it,
His kiss will cool it.
How can his heart be cold
When mine is uncontrolled?
Or his glance not reply
To the love in mine eye?
O, if such things can be,
End, heart, thy misery.
If he though far away,
Voices did not obey,
Voices of sense that tell
What my heart cannot quell—
Its longing, its yearning—
Did he not turning
Come to me never so far,—
Then, cloud ye, moon and star;
Let him not come to-night,
E'en though my heart might—
Hark, heart! Whose step is this?
Foolish heart, why doubt thy bliss?
Doubting lips may kiss—may kiss.

The Golden Cross

A golden cross, lifted so high,
 Above the noisy thoroughfare,
That rarely did a wandering eye
 Discover that a cross was there.

But wreathed around it prayers arise,
 And heavenward human songs ascend,
While motionless against the skies,
 Its silent, golden arms extend.

Upon it morning sunbeams flash,
 About the dark form star-gleams play,
And wind and rain against it dash,
 Yet there it stands unmoved alway.

Light Lingers Long

Light lingers long as Winter wears to Spring,
And O my heart can hear those choirs sing,
That break the brief spell of a Summer's night
And herald days that swoon at noon of light.
Now, though around my door cold March winds throng,
Light lingers long.

I wake and laugh to see the yellow sun
An hour when winter nights had long to run:
And when I see where once I played the mole,
As hours of insight lengthen in my soul,
I will not chide a world of pain and wrong,—
Light lingers long.

Shadows

If all the year were June,
With tangled roses and the bumble-bee,
In honeysuckle murmuring happily,
In lilies deep asleep at noon;
While sweet birds fill the sky,
How could I die?

If all the year were night,
A tempest past, the pure moon shining clear,
When all the glowing stars in heaven seem near
The slumbering earth wrapped in still light;
When pain is hushed in sleep,
How could I weep?

The Musician

There was a good musician,
 Who loved a lady fair,
And like a great magician
 Could charm her every care.

He deeply loved the lady,
 And when death closed her eyes,
For months no music played he,
 But gazed into the skies.

At last his sombre spirit
 Awoke and talked with her's:
He plays and she can hear it.
 Ah! how his music stirs!

A Call to Prayer

From the minaret the Moslem
 Bids men pray. "Let all work wait."
North, south, east and west he calls them,
 "God is one and God is great."

Far below a woman blesses
 God in new-found motherhood,
Singing to the babe she presses,
 "God is love and God is good."

A Tapestry

Love met Medusa on the Libyan plains,
 Whose serpent locks dart death at them that see.
"Ah boy," she cried, "the cause of all my pains,
 At last sweet vengeance I can wreak on thee."

Love looked nor faltered at her horrid gaze.
 She tore her hissing hair to strike him dead;
But where her wild blows fell, to her amaze,
 Red roses burst in bloom. Love laughing fled.

The Composer

He heard a music that he could not snatch
From moods' and muses' fitful higher flight.
He wrote the lower strains his ears could catch;
But in despair, his name he would not write.

He died. His sweet unfathered songs survived,
True, human voices of the life that is.
Men praised: but only knew the name contrived
To hide a grave's immortal melodies.

A Quatrain

Who sees Apollo feels himself divine.
Although his life a lowly course must run,
Yet in his heart he foots it with the sun,
And circles where immortal hours shine.

An Italian Sonnet Sequence

I

Take not your fingers from the ivory keys,
 But let them linger, straying here and there;
 Or let them sink melodiously where
Lie fair, locked pearls in music's sobbing seas.
We look and smile, artless of what doth please
 Us, for our lips are dumb, sealed with despair
 To say the happiness our mute hearts bear
And cannot tell except in strains like these.
Then go not. Hold that last note ere it flee.
 Weave thy sweet themes anew, until they wind
 A golden maze of dreams and harmony.
One wayward note adventurous way may find
 Where timid love in silence sits enshrined,
 And break his lips to song in sympathy.

II

The Alchemist long since left his dark cell,
The cold, white ashes ceased like gold to glow.
What are these magic arts that you now show,
Transmuting life by a mysterious spell?
The rose I gave like any rose did smell.
What primal breathings through your red lips flow?
For had you dropped the flower you kissed, I know
A soul had sunk and pined in bitter hell.
O since the time you took my rose of earth
And all day long the heeded bud you wore,
No rose a rose alone will bloom for me.
For now I know the secret of soul birth,
How earthly dust may have a deathless core,
All life turn soul, burned by love's alchemy.

III

Deep inundation floods my pleasant plain,
 Blotting the ordered fields from hill to hill;
 The green heights lie like emeralds fall'n at will,
The curved links broken that once bound the chain.
Now foul, black clouds my sunny heaven stain,
 With here and there a rift the blue depths fill.
 What areas of darkness, cold and still,
Lie, trackless, 'twixt the bright stars of the Wain!
A barren desolation drowns my days:
 Mere scattered peaks of time I now behold
 Which mischief Love has named—Rare sights of thee.
Since, then, my life so little land displays,
 Appear, I pray, as Thetis might of old,
 And stay this swift encroachment of the sea.

IV

As a dark heathen, lord of captive knights,
Scowls jealous-eyed fretting lest they break free
And wreaks his hate in constant cruelty,
But spares their lives that ransom rich requites:
And when day's woes are drowned in starry nights
And their swart captor sleepeth stupidly,
Those knights, chain harnessed, wake to liberty
And tell strange tales till dawn their prison lights:
So tyrant mind permits of thee no thought,
Would famish heart, would yield no time for love,
But teach me every hour the world's rough might.
At last when sleep steals reason's keys, gold-wrought,
And locks him safe, in dreams of thee I rove
In endless revel through the fairy night.

V

Not for my skilless hand that fond deceit
He knew, whose pious heart kindled to paint
On high cathedral walls a deathless saint,
And for her face and form find beauty meet.
Ah, what face can his brush, bewitched, repeat,
Save her's for whom his temples throb and faint?
So kneeling ages make their holy plaint
In lowly worship at his mistress' feet.
No, my poor love must run an earthly pace,
Nor borrow adoration from a shrine
To light thy steps down an immortal way.
Yet listen, for my bosom holds thy face!
It would be holy for such love as thine,
And deathless are the hues its walls display.

VI

What classic form can hold the restless song
That day and night the world is chiming me,
Rending my heart with its discordancy?
"Pain, pain is right; joy, joy, ah! joy is wrong."
Now on these April lawns the robins throng
And sing, "O happy love, O ecstasy."
A voice beside me mutters, "Charity."
"Yes," cowering wretch, "to one God we belong."
"Love, love, O love," all sunny places sing.
"Nay, suffer, suffer," cries each human sight,
"Thy garland be the crown thy Lord did wear."
My heart was faint at thought of suffering,
Until love whispered: "First be my true knight,
Or pain can find no load for you to bear."

VII

Death the revealer cast his portals wide,
With torch held high he peered without awhile,
Then looked toward me and with a radiant smile
He beckoned one who stood close by my side.
My tears fell down me like a sobbing tide
That mourns its ebb back from a happy isle.
With hands outstretched I paused at that dread stile;
But she he motioned tarried not nor hied.
I looked at death, but saw life's quenchless light;
Disease's havoc lay defeated, an
Immortal self, strong, loving, pure she showed.
Then spread a magic pathway in my sight,
A bridge of Chinevat, sin cannot span,
Whereon she passed within death's bright abode.

VIII

As one who plays a lovingly-held lyre
Deep in the night, till dreams his lids surprise,
When his friend softly pillows him and tries
To free the fingers from the close-clasped wire
That, smitten, sounds alarm to rouse its sire;
So gently loose my love from one that plies
Sweet music for my soul—from memories,—
Vain, backward yearnings when I ought aspire.
Not as a frightened mother flings afar
A poisonous weed her little child grasped tight;
But as a mother takes her daughter's hands
That clasp a husband's neck, he pledged for war,—
So loosen love from that stern self must fight,
Aye, fight and conquer yet in distant lands.

Sonnets of Seasons

I

Instead of thinking man were I a tree,
When barren Winter's snow-wrapped slumbers break
Upon a world of verdure, I'd awake
All blossoms sweet for nestling bird or bee.
As petals fell young fruit would cover me,
Warm-ripening in the sun, till Fall would shake
My shriveled leaves, from heavy branches take
The ruddy rounds and rock me drowsily.
But lordly man whose free intelligence
Exalts him master of the earth, may show
No flower in youth, no fruit as age appears.
God grant my free mind prove its high pretense,
Nor yield returns less sure than those that grow
On each gnarled apple-tree the green earth bears.

II

I stand outside a church this summer day;
The sky is blue above the golden cross,
Around me purple lilacs droop and toss,
Among the trees the birds sing blithe and gay.
Through open windows floats a solemn lay,
A funeral hymn wailing a human loss
O'er a loved body, soon forsaken dross.
Hark! now the organ ceases. Hush! they pray.
O barren brightness of the summer skies!
O singing birds, and warm, sweet-scented wind!
Ye tell me not to whom those voices sound.
Fair nature, heaven enough to my poor eyes,
O bid me not in thee my joy to find!
No lasting peace is in thy beauty found.

III

I walk through silent showers of golden leaves.
As startled from a dream, the bright fall'n things
Leap up and bind me in their magic rings,
Weird, whirling circles as an old witch weaves.
High up above the trees, a sea-gull cleaves
The moist, gray sky, now up, now down, nor sings
One note;—no music Autumn with her brings
Except the wind that lulls while it bereaves.
A slender elm twig, trembling with the care,
Supports an oriole's deserted nest;
The brilliant bird flies now in southern air
Where ruffling cold no longer chills her breast.
So shall the soul when frosty fall days come,
Abandon earth's abode and seek a fairer home.

IV

I would some year my life were like this day—
 This autumn day, when but a few remain
 Before cold flakes descend upon the plain—
A revery with face turned back to May.
The crops are harvested and stored away,
 The leaves are shed; amid the stubble grain
 The bonfires smoke, like incense in a fane,
A cleansing rite the fertile furrows pay.
Earth's labor done, before December snows,
 These last warm days turn back to merry Spring
 And dream along the fragrant path they came.
Happy the life that pausing at its close,
 Can smile upon the past without a sting,
 And smiling turn to pay death's wintry claim.

Present Day Sonnets

The Christ

I

"A gift I have, a sore perplexity,
 That pains me like a friend's farewell embrace,
 Or unavailing grief o'er a dead face,
The gift of love which Thou hast given me.
The hearts of men and women I can see:
 Their hopes and transports, bright with heavenly grace,
 Their sin and torture, twined with hell's grimace;
But I am dumb to speak my ecstasy.
How can I tell them all the love I bear?
 Nay, would they understand my words or heed,
 What can I do this utmost love to show,—
One utterance, one deed the world can share?
 Like dripping breasts my heart with love doth bleed,
 O, I would die if all mankind might know.

II

"Would I could give that naked man my cloak,
And, Father, heal that leper's foul disease,
Could blot sin from each criminal heart, could ease
The laborer's load, give bread where starved men choke.
Would I could give them peace that are heart-broke
And pour new wine upon old losses' lees.
At every step the needy on me seize;
My hands alone cannot lift every yoke."
Then his soul heard: "Be rich in life, not gifts
That pass like morning dews; but give instead
A dower for all ages and all needs.
Thy soul perfect through suffering, till it lifts
The burden of a self forever dead,
From all mankind, and new conditions breeds."

The Altar-Rail

Their hands they hold across the altar-rail,
From various need reached toward a common hope.
In scraps of prayer and errant thought they grope
A solace for their souls that will not fail.
O piteous hands! Poor, puny hands! too frail,
Were you outstretched by emperor or pope,
To grasp the titan world, with sin to cope,—
Gnarled, jeweled, soiled, thin, palsied, pale.
God fill these hands, of you they ask an alms.
The world has given, but the hands still plead;
The world has taken, you alone can fill.
O love divine, heap with hid gifts these palms.
O Christ's sweet love, supply each bowed soul's need,—
A human clasp moved by a heavenly will.

Our Looms

"Rich stuffs our looms weave for fair ladies' wear."
So read the caption in the daily press;
Then followed fabrics in which women dress,
Whose costly garments win a beggar's stare.
Our looms weave? No! but men and women, where
Looms roar Niagara-like, whose strain and stress
Dull ears and eyes and soul,—a weariness
Rare pleasure cannot lift or night repair.
Our looms weave? No! but men become machines,
Which wages, dropping scanty oil, supply.
The helps mind conjured here destroy the mind;
For flesh and soul are fed to make sateens,
While spindles, shuttles, faster, faster, fly,
The brutish engine like all tyrants blind.

Street Musicians

As once a noisy car bore me along,
I met a group of street musicians. They
Were near me, but I could not hear them play,—
I only marked the influence of their song:
The violinist's eyes flash at the throng,
The harper's fingers through the dumb strings stray.
I saw the girl's throat swell, as in her lay
She found a moment she would fain prolong.
Thy saints their glorious viols strike, O Lord,
I see them stand and know they sing to me;
But life's confusion dulls my spirit's ear.
I catch, now here, now there, some broken chord,
Though my ears strain towards heaven's minstrelsy.
O give me peace that I the whole may hear!

Cuba Libre

America, hast thou forgot thy birth,
 Thy long reluctant fight for liberty,
 The starved and ragged ranks that wrenched thee free,
Cheered by one nation prescient of thy worth?
Thine enemy, the captain state on earth,
 Thy motherland, hater of tyranny,
 Insanely ruled, held fast her child in fee
For profit,—paid at last by death and dearth.
Free land, speak thou to her crouched by thy coasts
 Who would like thee be free. Yes, break the chain
 A parent's proud decrepitudes impose.
Where women war than smile on Spanish hosts;
 Where men despair and leave the sweetening cane,
 And with their sickles hew their hated foes.

Sophocles

O Sophocles, I would know Greek for thee
And pluck my honey from the comb the bees
From sweet Hymettus stored, where sunny seas
Murmur the measures that are joy to me.
I see the gods reign in thy tragedy:
They walk the earth and whisper in the breeze,
Thy world is full of God and suppliant knees
And righteousness controlling destiny.
But our sad times at higher beings flout;
We do not snatch from heaven to feed the soul,
We cannot find a God in anything.
So blind we do not see our torch is out,
Our torch of poesy. The rich-wrought bowl
We clasp and grope along, but cannot sing.

The Police Court

Are these Thy children, Lord, this criminal row,
 Who in the crowded court their sentence wait,
 Straining to hear the judge pronounce their fate,
And laugh or scowl or deep indifference show?
Their prison days,—that fear is all they know—
 Imprisoned souls unheeding their fixed state;
 Poor, sensual faces, weak and passionate,
A mark of Cain, foredoomed to crime each brow.
Ah no! Our crimes are not in birth's decree;
 Our evil deeds are not the fruit full-grown
 Of seedling sins set out in infancy.
We are not blown about as leaves are blown;
 For our temptation tells us we are free,—
 Thy children, God, when we a choice are shown.

New Hampshire

The harvest of our hills is not their corn,
Sweet maple sap, or fragrant riven pine.
These granite outcrops feed few sheep or kine,
Unshepherded the flocks by beasts are torn.
Here is no wealth by sudden effort born,
From field or forest, river, mill or mine;
Her sons for cities or rich soil resign
Their brown, bare farms, unyielding and forlorn.
But where Chocorua lifts its serrate peak
Sharp into heaven above the heart-shaped lake,
Abundant crops, unseen, clothe every knoll.
Here city-burdened lives their birthright seek;
A perfumed peace with every breath they take,—
The harvest of our hills is in the soul.

Carmargo

Carved marble face, enraptured secret smile,
In the cool foyer, silent and alone,
Outside the opera's passion-laden zone,
Unguarded yet untouched by what is vile;
Carmargo, dancer, mistress of each wile
That pleased a vicious court, was thy breast stone,
When arms of laughing youths, wove thee a throne,
Scornful of pleasure who could kings beguile?
Inscrutable, fertile in joy, benign,
Compassionate of lower human need,
With lithe, ecstatic steps engendering life;
Like nature pouring a seductive wine,
Patient with sense, and folly's ignorant greed,
Knowing the soul is born in sensual strife.

The White Hearse

Death, I have walked with you through summer days,
Bright summer days, life leaping to its prime;
When fields laughed innocent of harvest time,
And you were banished from sweet country ways
Pelted with blossoms;—prone, yet strong to raise
Your head and, like your fallen parent, climb
To hellish rule in city streets. Whose crime,
The myriad children each fair Summer slays?
Man's work, this is, not God's. Him we forget,
Housing our brethren like beasts of the soil,
Of beauty stripped, of smiles, of youth, of health.
The curse of slavery is with us yet;
Which uses without love, accepts the toil,
Discards the life, and builds on blood its wealth.

Democracy

Democracy, those men have done thee wrong,
That paint thee flaunting, with a brutal face.
Not to Rome's proletarian populace,
Nor Paris mobs that round a red flag throng,
Nor London slums of saturate sin belong
Such names—deluded, pitiable race—
Though in their husky mutterings we can trace
God urging brotherhood upon the strong.
Democracy on law and virtue stands:
The home it loves and children at the knee;
Its bread it earns, its lips can speak in prayer.
Though greed and pride would bind its giant hands,
I trust the conscience of humanity,
See freedom widen in the people's care.

The Pacific

Fierce courage his and will straight as a Rune,
Who first sailed these vast seas and did not tire.
Unknown to him his haven or his hire,
What reef, what race might wreck him late or soon.
Clear skies above where Venus shone at noon,
Blue waves beneath stained by an Indian dyer;
At night stars dripped from plunging spars like fire,
To wastes of water underneath the moon.
The unknown he explored, home years behind.
And what ahead, oblivious wave, palm isle?
Or, farther still, old loves endeared tenfold?
So sail my soul, a fairer heaven to find,
Whom comfort, safety cannot long beguile,
Seek new gods though you never greet the old.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

Form L9–Series 4939

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 925 208 1